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*Black Mirror*, Episode: "Arkangel"

The show *Black Mirror* focuses on current trends happening in society and/or predicting what the future will become like because of new technology and the role it plays in our lives. Technology affects how our society acts and what becomes considered 'normal'. The specific episode, "Arkangel," focuses on an overprotective mother who is using technology to control what her daughter sees, where she goes and what she does. This episode is trying to communicate the problem in society of parents using tracking apps to constantly monitor their children and censoring children from real life as well through internet, television and social media.

"Arkangel" focuses on a mother who participates in an experimental study of inserting an implant into her daughter which allows the mother to see the daughter's vitals, see what the daughter is currently observing and doing while being able to censor what the daughter is seeing. For example, her mother blurs out violence or anything potentially upsetting. Her child is not able to see any pain or violence. The audience watches as the child is confused yet intrigued by what violence is. The daughter then stabs herself with a pencil over and over hoping to see blood but all she can see is a blurry object. Throughout the episode we watch the mom track her child, watch her daughter have a sexual relationship with a significant other and participate in drugs. The daughter eventually finds out her mom is still monitoring her and becomes so upset she beats her mother and then hitchhikes away to never see her mother again. The ending is a

powerful scene, it shows that a parent who has no trust in their child will end up pushing their child away from them. The daughter was so protected she felt no emotion when abusing her mother but rather left her mom unconscious on her bedroom floor. Although this episode is an extreme case of a tracking app such as 'Life360' or censorship on the internet and television, it shows how limited privacy affects one and the problems that could arise. Tracking apps and censorship of media causes overprotective parents, decreases the child's self-reliance while also being an invasion of privacy. Katleen Gabriels wrote an article called, "I keep a close watch on this child of mine's: a moral critique of other-tracking apps" which demonstrates a stance towards tracking devices by parents and the concerns that should be addressed. Gabriels states, "In the case of other-tracking apps, our concern is that they bring parents *too close* and they do not respect the other's heterogeneity, autonomy, and privacy." Tracking apps and censoring the child creates a lack of trust and respect between parents and children. Approximately 68% of women and 57% of men with mental health problems are parents. ("Mental Health Statistics: Family and Parenting"). Marketers are aware that parents fear for their children and many have irrational anxiety, therefore they keep creating these tracking apps to put the parents at 'ease'.

Parents have created an idea that the world is more unsafe than when they were children. This culture fear created ignores scientific studies that the Western world has become safer and that most sexual violences against children and teenagers actually occur by those who they trust. (Gabriel). An individual must learn self-reliance and autonomy to become a successful adult and to develop into an independent individual. The constant surveillance of the child shows they are not ready and need their parents for every decision they make. Although parents are trying to protect their children, they are creating more fear, decreasing self-reliance, loss of privacy and

the loss of self autonomy. Parents must be able to find a way to build a relationship with their children where there is both respect and an equal amount of involvement in their lives.

Although *Black Mirror* goes to the extreme by creating a device that does not yet exist, they represent the current technology of tracking and watching your child's every move. If we stay on this track, our future could become this episode, "Arkangel," of *Black Mirror*. Every parent wants their child to become successful, we must learn to teach them to be independent by themselves. "Early adolescence goes together with a striving for autonomy that prepares the young boy or girl for separation from the parent. These technologies might hinder autonomy, self-reliance, and trust, which are all important to become a conscientious adult." (Gabriel). It is time to look at the technology we are using and wonder if we are using them for the right reasons. 'Life360' once started to find family members in devastating situations, it is now used everyday.

## References

“Black Mirror: Arkangel.” Season 4, episode 2.

Gabriels, Katleen. “‘I Keep a Close Watch on This Child of Mine’: A Moral Critique of Other-Tracking Apps.” *Ethics and Information Technology*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2016, pp. 175–184., <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10676-016-9405-1>.

“Mental Health Statistics: Family and Parenting.” *Mental Health Foundation*, 16 Jan. 2020, [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-family-and-parenting](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-family-and-parenting)